

Cages Nest Birds

\$60,000,000 USS Bennington Is a Huge Floating Airport

Part of a Series.
By MAX B. COOK

Scraps—Forward Station Editor.

ABOARD USS BENNINGTON, Essex Class Carrier, Somewhere at Sea (Delayed).—A huge bulk of a ship, bristling with guns, appeared out of the mist as our navy tug chugged out to meet it.

Neatly camouflaged in blue and gray, it towered above the water, its control "islands" atop an expansive flight deck, extending high into the sky.

It was the navy's newest type \$60,000,000 fighting ship—a fortified city within itself and one of the nation's most powerful of floating airports. Our small group aboard the tug was to board it and remain with it for a week, learning something of the power and efficiency of these "greatest battleships of all time." For they are just that.

As we strode close to the starboard side seaward, speedily left down and made fast a steel ladder. We climbed up the moonramp on the starboard side to a larger deck sufficiently large to easily house and maintain more than 100 planes. There were more on the deck at that moment.

Crewmen took our baggage and Chief A. G. Beckman, stocky damage control officer of the Bennington, scooped us up into the "islands" to the admiral's cabin.

The three narrow flights of steel steps we climbed, pulling ourselves up by the cables or ropes which crisscrossed the city guard rails.

Steps Barely Wide Enough—

"There is no room for planes on the steps, are just wide enough for one person. At the top of each is a narrow moonramp—necessary in case of large quantities being flooded—due, of course, to safety council would allow anywhere else. It's a sheet of metal, several inches high, which must be stepped over before the first step down can be reached. Lighters are always in attendance and a narrow "runner" balances between each flight of steps in a passageway or narrow that can move through it without any passenger's protruding the hand rail look alike. As a result we are always getting lost, reviewing steps and finally approaching to ourselves to find the way.

As we reached a deck midway up the "islands" where the captain and admiral's cabins were located, we halted before a hole in the moonramp wall. It was exactly the shape of a life raft, with rounded corners showing on one side. One step showed it was a corner but couldn't see himself in it. Chief Beckman stepped and stepped through the opening before a foot of the deck. Two of these moonramps—each with a barred hatch, we were in the admiral's cabin, meeting Capt. J. H. Hykes, our host.

"Quarters sometimes are difficult to handle sometimes are difficult to handle," said the captain. "So I have placed some numbers on signs of mine and you will find them." Each number represented a room of his and a "bed" in room No. 1 and that was good for one-third of the admiral's room with bed and shower.

Big Water Problem.

Instructions with regard to the shower, effective immediately, were given. Adv: "Turn on the shower and let yourself turn off the shower and keep yourself there on the shower and stay



What are our new big Essex class aircraft carriers like? How are they going to give a new amount of intensive in landing and take off of the planes and from their harbored aircraft? How do they provide you can get greater themselves from the energy powerful and fast take off? What can you expect the "carrier" and "Admiral" and "Admiral" come along over the ship's deck? How can they get across of fighters and bombers off the big night deck, second deck and third deck or quickly without apparent effort? And how does this new-class floating airport-battlehips—a complete city in itself with its own ship deck, fuel, food and crew health—operate down under the expander flight and bomber decks, in the very bowels of the carrier, very near "deep sleep" bunkers? Max B. Cook, Scraps—Forward Station Editor, was allowed by the navy to board one of the newest Essex class carriers, accompany it as it went to sea and write the story. He has flown back with the answers to the above questions, and many more.

That's the signal for everyone to be at battle stations. You soldiers will have to get into your shoes and report here in this room part of the admiral's cabin today. When the call "General Quarters" sounds you will have an opportunity to get a bit more sleep. If you wish, before more call at 6:30. (And you sometimes getting-up time is 6:00 or 8 a. m., to 7:00.)

It was 1:30, and down to mess deck. The wicketable was in the bag. Three flights down to the bag deck, on first deck and down through a small hatch and to sleep in narrow bunks in the big ward room one deck below. More than 100-overs actually

labeled with clean, white, starched linoleum lined the ward room. Most of the baggage, neatly laid out, was stowed with the old-fashioned silver and polished wooden trunks. Three partitions made could not be taken by general only those six having markings.

EVEN Steaks

Officers and pilots stood behind chairs until command orders arrived at the head of each table. White-clothed colored waiters bowed about placing steaks, coffee. Excellent steaks followed. Thin good-sized steaks, green peas, a salad, fine browned bread (made by the carrier's bakers by great young cooks) and the usual hot dessert. Colary and olives were there if you wished them. The coffee was something to dream about.

At the head of our table was Chief E. J. Dore, a flying net-

work with pairs of experience on old and new and senior officer of the Bennington. On the left was Chief G. H. Hoag, commander of the entire air group and Chief E. E. Colston, the air officer. The main quarters (ward room) was used to lay for the chairs for the table, and five large dice with card faces were to be used.

Chief Hoag and young boys thought to cut. (We never did have any luck at cards either.)

During the next few days we received not only a first-eye view of the carrier from aloft but a most amazing "bird's-eye" view from the very bowels of the ship, every possible square foot given over to the very latest machinery of all kinds, and lots of it. It is a self-contained, complete city that can do an 8000 for money at a time, stepping itself with fresh water, feeding its crew of over 2000 well and satisfying the ammunition "hunger" of 100 fighters, torpedoes and five bombers, each carrying over 80, with high-octane-to-handle high octane gas, heavy bombs and torpedoes.

Operation of the "islands" now and lower and the ship deck is a story in itself and will be told later in this series.

Japan already has got the power of these "greatest battleships" of all time. They have been largely instrumental in the success of the leap-frogging tactics which have bedeviled the decks of the Japanese grand islands and brought the Army of Army Down the Pacific from New Guinea into the Philippines.

The best of battlehips can shoot shells something over a score of miles or more. This aircraft carrier can do double heavy, destructive bombs—and accurately—3000 feet or more with its bottom. And, when attacked it can fill the air with an almost impregnable wall of high speed and from its fast-firing five-inch guns and multitude of anti-aircraft guns.

Tomorrow: We get under way.

